DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 150 500 CG 012 167

AUTHOR Barnett, David M.
TITLE The Others-Concept and Research of Children's Group Behavior.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 8p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility ; Paper presented at Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (San Francisco, California, August 26-30, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Children; Group Relations; *Individual Characteristics; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Personality Assessment; Personality Studies; Projective Tests; Research Projects; *Social Behavior
IDENTIFIERS *Others Concept; *Paired Hands Test

ABSTRACT

This paper defines a personality construct, the "others-concept," as "a person's general expectancies or perceptions about other people along a positive-negative continuum." This construct helps conceptualize how predictions and assumptions about possible social interactions are made when the amount of information concerning the other individuals is minimal and ambiguous. The paper also makes use of the Paired Hands Test (PHT), a personality assessment technique combining projective and objective features, which is felt to be a measure of the "others-concept." The results of a series of studies investigating the relationship between children's scores on the PHT, and their actual social behaviors in small-group situations, are summarized and discussed. (Author/BP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED150500

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE O
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D. BARNETT
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOU
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE-
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

1977 APA Convention

Symposium: Emerging Others-Concept Theory
Recent Findings and Practical Implications

Paper: The Others-Concept and Research on Children's Group Behavior

Presenter: David W. Barnett
Department of Special Education
and School Psychology
University of Cincinnati

This paper describes a personality construct, the others-concept, and the Paired Hands Test (PHT), a personality assessment technique combining projective and objective features felt to be a measure of the others-concept. Also, the results of a series of studies investigating the relationship between children's scores on the PHT, and their actual social behaviors in small group situations, will be summarized.

The Others Concept

The others-concept is defined as a person's general expectancies or perceptions about other people along a positive-negative continuum (Barnett and Zucker, 1975). The question that the others-concept allows us to conceptualize is how predictions and assumptions about possible social interactions are made when the amount of information concerning the other individuals is minimal and ambiguous, as determined by empirical means. Within the context of research reported in this paper, children have been given the opportunity to assign meanings to photographs or slides depicting possible social interactions. Questions arise as to the origins of the meanings and the value of the information in predicting the behavior of the person making the judgement.

CG012162

In order to further clarify what is meant by the others-concept, a few statements about the self-concept may be helpful. There has been a needed shift in the conceptual framework surrounding the self-concept away from "traits" or "attributes" of a person towards "an analysis of interactions in an explicitly described context of relations" (Cottrell, 1970). One might consider the "self-other organization" (Cottrell, 1970) or a self-situational organization. A basic question is whether or not there is a unity of traits in personality organization that are predictors of behavior, or whether or not the situational aspects actually contribute more than the unifying traits in predicting social behaviors (Mischel, 1968; Bem and Allen, 1974). But most psychologists would, at this point, accept the utility of the self-concept, and the authors hope, the others-concept, in understanding a person's behavior. They are obviously related. In terms of increments to predictive validity, the above concepts may in the future be integrated with situational variables as well as the individual's own phenomenological assessment of the situation (Mischel, 1973).

The Paired Hands Test

Although the authors consider the others-concept to be of sufficient importance to stand alone from a specific assessment technique, the Paired Hands Test (PHT) (Zucker and Barnett, in press), because of several unique features, has been used exclusively for the primary research in this area to date. In order to evaluate a person's others-concept, researchers have made use of twenty slides (or photographs), one black and one white, in a relationship which implies an interaction between the hands. The pictures are shown one at a time and the child is asked to respond in terms of what he thinks the hands are doing by

selecting one statement out of five presented for each slide. The statements describe possible interactions between people chosen from the verbatim responses from children in response to the question, "What do you think the hands are doing?", and scaled by a Thurstone type technique along a continuum ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative interactions between the hands. The technique has gone through several revisions leading to the development of the others-concept as a theoretical construct and to viewing the test as a measure of the extent to which children interact with others in a warm, non-threatening, non-abusive, cooperative and helpful manner (Zucker and Jordan, 1968; Zucker, 1976; Barnett and Zucker, 1973, 1975, 1977; Zucker and Barnett, in press).

Behavioral Research with the Paired Hands Test

The basic premise of the research has been that children who perceive social interactions differently, for example, in a more friendly or more hostile manner, will exhibit different social behaviors. The relationship between PHT scores and social interactions has been explored through a systematic method of behavioral observations with extreme scoring children. The general hypotheses that the authors have been testing in a series of experiments is that children with a more positive others-concept (those with high PHT scores) will interact in a small group situation in a more positive and task-related manner than children with a lower others-concept.

The behaviors of the children in the experiments were studied while the children participated in an assigned task in groups of three, or in several studies, four. The time allowed on the task was usually fifteen minutes. In one study, when an observation room was available,

the groups were videotaped, but in other studies, a system using tape recordings of individual children's comments through the use of an undirectional microphone was found to work satisfactorily.

The tasks themselves became a significant part of the study. The range of verbal comments made by the children was remarkable when one considers that they were simply asked to perform a brief, structured task intended by the experimenters to be enjoyable. Even when the tasks did not elicit differences between high and low scoring children, the range of behaviors persisted to a large degree. The tasks varied from the relatively uninteresting one of matching domino faces, to tasks that seemed inherently more interesting like making posters with magic markers, or assembling a large, very complicated model of a steamboat with tinkertoys.

Although the tasks were originally chosen to be similar, it became apparent that there were differences between the tasks as to the interest and enthusiasm generated, the challenge presented, the group processes elicited and the frustrations involved.

A system of categorizing the child's comments to provide behavioral observations that could be statistically analyzed in a reliable manner was developed. Each response was judged on two dimensions. The first dimension was that of being task-related (identified by a T) or non-task related (identified by an N). Task related items were defined as responses which have to do directly with the tasks. They were either instructions, questions, suggestions, or comments. Non-task related responses were those considered to be irrelevant in relationship to the task; they were conversations, comments, or noises which were not concerned with solving the problem or completing the task.

The second dimension required the judging of a statement as being either positive (+) or negative (-). A plus response was one that might be a helpful suggestion or which merited compliance such as agreement or support. It could be either task related (T) or non-task related (N). If non-task related, it would be a comment which was made in a nonabrasive way. A negative statement was one which would typically evoke anger, or be generally abrasive or hostile in an actual or implied way.

In a pilot study, a transcription was typed of all comments for each child. Because of the high level of agreement, in a larger study judges listened to the actual tapes and assigned each verbal comment to one of the categories of behaviors. When two judges independently listened to the tapes, the correlations were .99 for T+, .98 for N-, .96 for N+, and .93 for T-. The T+ and N- categories are less ambiguous and are perhaps most important because they demonstrate opposite types of responses, while the T- and N+ categories combine positive and negative features. The N- category may be most influenced by social inhibitions and pressures to conform.

Some examples of coded comments are as follows: "You better help me" (T+); "Why don't you put the puzzle into the coke bottle?" (T-); "You love that guy?" (N+); "Come on now and get this done or I'll blast your heads off" (T-): "Let's put the red pieces over here" (T+).

The findings from the studies have consistently demonstrated that there is a trend for children who have a high others-concept to interact more positively in small groups than children who have a low others concept. The subjects who had a positive others-concept showed a tendency to be more cooperative, goal-directed and pleasant. The

subjects who had a negative others-concept were found to be less cooperative and goal-directed, and they also showed a tendency to be more abrasive, and sometimes rude, with other members of their group.

It should be emphasized that the differences between subjects with a high others-concept and a low others-concept were not always readily apparent. Frequently they were not, and there were occasions when individuals with a high others-concept acted negatively, and vice versa. The overall results found were only apparent by coding blindly over 12,000 separate behaviors of nearly 300 subjects and then comparing the totals. When this was done, the experimental data clearly demonstrated that, in general, a person who has a high others-concept is more likely to interact positively with others than a person with a low others-concept ($F(1,416)=28.94$, $P<.001$). The data also revealed, as might be expected, that some situations more than others bring out the differences between individuals with a high or low others-concept. In the situations which did not bring out the differences, the group trends revealed that the high and low scoring children were behaving similarly on the coded dimensions, rather than that a reversal had taken place. That is to say, no situations were found in which high scorers overall behaved more negatively than low scorers on the coded dimensions. When statistically significant behavioral differences were found, they were always in the direction of high-scoring subjects behaving more positively than low-scoring subjects. However, it must be kept in mind that these were group trends. Certainly, individual subjects sometimes formed exceptions to the rule.

References

Barnett, D., & Zucker, K. An exploration into children's interpersonal behavior as related to their perceptions of social interactions. Psychology in the Schools, 1973, 10, 61-66.

Barnett, D., & Zucker, K. The others-concept and friendly and cooperative behavior in children. Psychology in the Schools, 1975, 12, 495-501.

Barnett, D., & Zucker, K. Validating a measure of children's others-concept through population and behavior variables. Journal of Personality Assessment, 1977, 41, 131-143.

Bem, D., & Allen, A. On predicting some of the people some of the time: the search for cross-situational consistencies in behavior. Psychological Review, 1974, 81, 506-520.

Cottrell, L. Some neglected problems in social psychology. In G. Stone and H. Farberman (Eds.) Social Psychology Through Symbolic Interaction. Waltham, Mass: Xerox Publising, 1970.

Mischel, W. Personality and Assessment. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968.

Mischel, W. Toward a cognitive social learning reconceptualization of personality. Psychological Review, 1973, 80, 252-283.

Zucker, K. The others-concept: Its place in the schools. The School Psychology Digest, 1976, 5, 4-12.

Zucker, K., & Barnett, D. The paired hands test manual. Dallas, Texas: McCarron-Dial Systems, in press.

Zucker, K. & Jordan, D. The paired hands test: A technique for measuring friendliness. Journal of Projective Techniques and Personality Assessment, 1968, 32, 522-529.